

A
Fore-Warning,

And A

WORD

O F

Expostulation.

Unto the Rulers, Magistrates, Priests
of England; and Her Dominions, uttered
forth from the Spirit of the Lord;
that they may Read, Weigh, and
Consider.

By *Richard Baxter*

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A

Fore-Warning:

AND

A WORD

OF

EXPOSTULATION,

Unto the Rulers, Magistrates, Priests of England, and Her Dominions, &c.



Ive ear O ye Rulers of England and her Dominions, (who are now exalted) of what degree or quality soever, diligently hearken to the reproof of the Lord, which is uttered concerning you; is it not for you to do Justice and Equity in this Nation? and to undoe the heavy burden, which hath been and is born amongst the people? knowing that for leaving this thing undone, your Predecessors (the fore-going power) was rejected of the Lord; and think ye that if ye be found in the same steps, and walking in the same path, that the same hand (which is the righteous hand of the Lord) will not reach you, and bring you down though you be never so high? and may think your selves never so sure; and though you may in your thoughts strive with Eternity, yet know your day is comprehended in it, and must have an end assuredly. Therefore stay a little and consider, honestly in the sight of God let us reason together; for what cause is it think you the Lord hath brought you into power.

power and exalted you? is it because the Lord hath a love to you more than any other? or is it because the Lord is well pleased with your doings? or is it because your Righteousness exceeds theirs, that are rejected and cast out before you? let that which is just in all your consciences judge, and answer me, whether it be for all, or any of these things forementioned, if it be, then what means all these abominations which are of late excorciſed? and (as it were) free toleration of them? for there is no restraint at all by any man in power (high or low) laid upon them; but the Flood-gates, or rather the Hell-gates of wickedness are opened wide, truly it is very hard to be uttered the several wickednesses committed, as Stage-plays, and other plays, Bear-baiting, Bul-baiting, leading the poor creatures up and down the streets, drest with Bells and Ribbons, & Bag-pipes playing before them, multitudes of men, women and children following them, leaping, shouting, and rejoycing, now this is publicly done to the amazement of all that fear the Lord; and the private wickedness is exceeding hard to be uttered, as Drunkenness, Whoring, Thieving, Murthering, Revelling, Blaspheming God, Scoffing, and Deriding all that fear him: When I have beheld many of these things, my heart hath even melted within me, to consider the end of them, for truly I must bear my Testimony, (in the fear of the Lord) that the tenth part of the wickedness now committed, was not committed in the time of the fore-going Power, though the Lords controversy is with them, and he hath brought them to Judgment: Therefore see, search and read, this is my advice, if your Righteousness exceeds not their's, you can in no wise escape the Judgment of God, who is Just, and renders to every one according to their doings, and if the hypocrite be brought to Judgment (who said and did not) what will become of the open prophane (read with that of God in you) and then you will understand; for I tell you the sin of the hypocrite and the sin of the open prophane, is all abomination in the sight of God, and for judgment, though (it may be) the stroak may be heavier upon the one, then upon the other; read I say, and then you will know your Condition, and think not, that in this day the returning to your abominable broth and Swins flesh, which

the Lord spued out many years since, will be an acceptable sacrifice in this day of the Lords great Manifestation and appearance, who is risen in great might and Power, to confound and dash in pieces, root up, consume and burn, whatsoever the Heavenly God hath not planted, for into the fire must it be cast, which burneth for ever.

And you who are the Ministers of this, which the Lords curse is to, *wo, wo*, from the Lord is your portion, and better it had been *you had never been born then to grieve Gods good Spirit in you*, and all his children by doing that which the witnesse of God in you condemns for: Oh you prophets of wine and strong drink, have you been hid in the earth these many years, & are you now moved out of your holes? *if your worship were the worship of the Spirit, then where hath been your Testimony all this while?* The true Ministers of the Gospel who speak by the spirit of God, concluded *woe* to themselves, if they preached not the Gospel; it was not the powers of the earth could silence them, but they were obedient to Gods commands, but dumb Idoll Shepherds have you been and so you are: And think not because you have the Powers of the Nation on your side, that your wares will come to a better Market than your Ancestors (if so good) for the day is dawning and the Sun is risen, which is the Light in thousands of men and women, and hath discovered the Marchant of *Babylon* with his deceitful wares, so that no more of them will be bought of you for ever, glory to God and Immortal praises of all his be given for ever and ever, who hath made bare your skirts, and so appears your shame and nakedness to all; And as to your long Robes, Vestures, and Girdles, you flutter up and down the streets in, you find neither rule nor example in Scripture of any of the Ministers of the Gospel, that wore such for distinction, yet there were such *as wore long Garments*; but they were deceivers, and know *this is your Figure which you wear*, you dumb and speechless, do you intrude into the house of the good Man, to the supper which he hath prepared? you are by him found dumb, and he hath pronounced against you to be bound hand and foot, and to be cast into utter darkness, this is your sentence from the Lord, and the type of your Girdles.

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And as to the Power that gives you life and vigour in this thing, I say, a day is given them (though it be a day) as in Winter, yet a work they have to do for the Lord, who hath ordained them as a Rod, and a Scourge to chastise his people by, and hath filled them (as a Vyal) with his wrath, which is to be powred upon that Spirit that hath dealt treacherously, and rebelled against Gods manifestation, and so just it is because the Lord hath appointed it, and when the Rod hath finished, and he that appointeth it saith it is enough, then into the fire shall it be cast. Therefore consider what you are, and how you are in the hand of the Lord, for assuredly the Lord will plead with the Rulers and Priests of this Nation, and a day of howling and bitter lamentation is to you, instead of your joy and pleasures which you so eagerly pursue; and was it not better for you to repent of the evil in yourselves, and then make laws for the suppressing it in others, which if it was truly done, from the principle of God in you, it might put a stop, or at least, set bounds to this flood of wickedness, which in these few months past hath over-flowed this Nation; for which cause the Lords fierce wrath is kindled against it, and except true repentance be made manifest from you with amendment of life, he will certainly execute his vengeance upon you, and who shall defend and deliver you? it is not your arme of flesh (you so much boast of) can do it, for they have been tryed by men, and have several times fallen into the hands of men; *but it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Lord*, if so, who shall deliver? for strong is the Lord who Judges: And know that Gods Judgments came upon the foregoing Powers, because they laid weights and burdens heavy to be born upon the seed of God wheresoever it did appear, and Imprisoned many of the Servants of the Lord, because for conscience sake they could not conform to the worlds vain and wicked customs, and because they could not for Conscience sake pay Tithes, to maintaine the National Hireling - Belly-Priests, these things with many other, they sought occasion by, to Persecute, and Imprison the Innocent Lambs of Christ Jesus, and would be Lords over the consciences of men, which thing is accursed of the Lord; *for it is not the Place or Duty of any*

any Magistrate whatsoever, or any other, to impose any thing upon the Conscience of any; for the Lord alone is he that doth exercise the conscience. Now I know you will own the saying in Scripture, which saith, *do unto every man as you would be done unto your selves*, and if you practise the same you will allow us the same liberty as you your selves have, that is, not to be forced to this way of worship, or the other, or any thing whatsoever which concerns conscience; for you your selves would not be so served; And I tell you plain we challenge the same liberty, as you enjoy as to matter of Worship and Religion, and if we be debarred of it, the Lord God, that pleads our cause, will give us it whether you will or nay. For I know that your Church and Religion (as you call it) cannot be settled without persecution; and truly I believe unto death; but the Scriptures must be fulfilled where there was a generation said, *had we lived in the Prophets dayes, we would not have put them to death*; but the same generation put Christ the great Prophet to death, and so you will say now, *had we lived in Queen Maryes days we would not have put the people of God to death, who suffered Martyrdom*; yet imprison and persecute them now, though not by open burning, because your day is not yet fully come; so you manifest your selves to be of the same seed upon which all the righteous blood hath been charged, from Abel even to this day; so one seed, the Persecutor; one seed persecuted; the one of Cain from all generations, the other of Abel from all generations; so now read your selves of one of these seeds; for of one of them assuredly you are, and your fruits declare the seed, your selves you cannot hide from the Witnesse of God in your own consciences, neither from it in ours: Therefore make not your finger as heavy as their Loynes that the Lord hath cast out before you; for as your sins exceeds theirs, so will your judgement exceed theirs, for just is the Lord; And further know that the Lord is cutting his work short in righteousness in the earth, and is quick and swift in his judgements, therefore think not your foundation is more sure then those that are gone before you, when the Lord comes to plead with you for your abominations; did you never take notice how thick the changes of Government have been in this

this Nation of late years? And what think you of it? Was it only to make room for you? If you think so, you are highly mistaken: Now had your power been more righteous, more just, more holy, and more for freedom, and liberty then those that are gone, then I should have both believed and confessed that the Lord only in love ordered the Government to you, and established your Throne; for righteousness, holynesse, meeknesse, equity, freedom and liberty in matters of conscience the Lord God owne and loves; and it is that he will set up in the earth, in despite of all that opposes it; Therefore in vain it is, *Oh Rod of Gods wrath*, to contend with him in whose hands thou art, for assuredly Gods justice will take hold on thee, and know also that thy reward and wages thou hast, and shalt have at the hand of the Lord; for thy service is thy pleasures and delights to the full satisfaction of thy desire; and what canst thou have more, *thou Rod of Gods Justice*? Thou being out of the sense of him who hath appointed thee; This is for thy service, For *Israels Rod* was appointed of the Lord, and for his service he had the spoile of *Jerusalem*, and the land, and this honour was he honoured withall; but there was a time when he was had in remembrance with the Lord, and was called to an account, and then into the fire was he cast; read and consider; I do not speak these things in contempt of your power, or in upbraiding you concerning these things which I have mentioned, Rulers, or Priests; the Lord is my witnesse; for I am subject unto it for conscience sake; but my Spirit is grieved within me and my soul vexed and burthened to see the abomination and wickednesse exalted in so high a measure, since the comming in of this Power; truly this City of *London* is as ripe for fire and brimstone, from Heaven, as *Sodom* was; for fulnesse of bread and idlenesse was *Sodoms* sin; consider what is the great sin of this City, is it not so that the greatest part of her Inhabitants knows hardly what to eat and what to drink, or what to put on? is this the end of plenty? or doth this answer the end of him that gives it? surely it is given to serve the necessity, and not the unlimited lust; cast your eyes abroad in the Creation, and see if every creature doth not condemn your selves; for I know not one creature

creature, that doth not answer the end of his Creation, but man; and so the good creatures of God will rise up in judgement against you in the day of the Lord; consider these things in the dread of the Lord, oh ye Rulers and Magistrates, for it lyeth at your doores, before the Lord hath sealed his Decree which is gone out against you, which is near at hand to be done for the Lord hath purposed it, and your condition calls for it, and remember you are warned by ones who suffereth with the seed of God in you, which is held in strong bondage, under the particulars above mentioned.

And lay it to heart, for it highly concerns you.

Rich. Crane.

The good man is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright amongst men; they all lie in wait for blood, they hunt every man his brother with a Net that they may do evill with both hands eagerly; the Prince asketh, and the judge asketh a reward; and the great man uttereth his mischievous desire, so they wrap it up.

Micah 7. 2, 3.

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